



# Southeastern Idaho News

BANNOCK, BEAR LAKE, BINGHAM, CARIBOU, FRANKLIN, ONEIDA & POWER COUNTIES

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

The March unemployment rate for the Pocatello Metropolitan Statistical Area crossed the 3 percent line, rising two-tenths to 3.1 percent. The labor force fell by 450 fewer workers from February, reflecting the decision by workers involved in the Kimberly-Clark closure and layoffs at AMI Semiconductor to pursue further education or job training.

Compared to a year earlier, however, the unemployment rate was down seven-tenths of a percent and total employment was up 420.

Nonfarm jobs rose 280 from February and 390 from March 2006. The jobs were fairly evenly distributed between the service and goods-producing sectors. Year-over-year, food manufacturing posted the largest increase in production jobs at 240. Professional and business services, encompassing a wide variety of occupations from physicians to call center workers, had the largest increase in the service sector – 190 – from one year earlier.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

- An Idaho Supreme Court ruling may have helped settle most southeastern Idaho water users concerns about losing their water rights this summer. Since the early 1900's water law has been based on the doctrine of "first in time, first right," thereby giving priority to water users based on the date their water rights were recorded. The new ruling requires water system managers to consider whether senior water rights are being put to good use and whether there is adequate water storage before resolving disputes.
- Southeastern Idaho will receive \$40 million as its share of the Connecting Idaho" road construction and upgrade program for 2007-2008 to widen U.S. Highway 30 from McCammon in Bannock County to Soda

Southeastern Idaho Table 1: Pocatello MSA Labor Force & Employment Bannock and Power counties

	Mar 2007*	Feb 2007	Mar 2006	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
<b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>					
<i>Seasonally Adjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	44,030	44,480	43,910	-1.0	0.3
Unemployment	1,360	1,290	1,660	5.4	-18.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.1	2.9	3.8		
Total Employment	42,670	43,190	42,250	-1.2	1.0
<i>Unadjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	44,890	45,470	44,870	-1.3	0.0
Unemployment	1,650	1,680	1,900	-1.8	-13.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.7	3.7	4.2		
Total Employment	43,240	43,790	42,970	-1.3	0.6
<b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS</b>					
<i>Goods-Producing Industries</i>	5,650	5,560	5,450	1.6	3.7
Natural Resources & Mining	30	30	30	0.0	0.0
Construction	1,830	1,740	1,840	5.2	-0.5
Manufacturing	3,790	3,790	3,580	0.0	5.9
Food Manufacturing	1,300	1,290	1,060	0.8	22.6
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	160	160	170	0.0	-5.9
Machinery Manufacturing	290	290	240	0.0	20.8
Other Manufacturing	2,040	2,050	2,110	-0.5	-3.3
<i>Service-Providing Industries</i>	34,140	33,960	33,950	0.5	0.6
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	7,420	7,310	7,350	1.5	1.0
Wholesale Trade	1,340	1,320	1,320	1.5	1.5
Retail Trade	4,700	4,650	4,550	1.1	3.3
Utilities	50	50	50	0.0	0.0
Transportation & Warehousing	1,320	1,290	1,430	2.3	-7.7
Information	700	700	670	0.0	4.5
Financial Activities	2,160	2,160	2,100	0.0	2.9
Professional & Business Services	5,700	5,680	5,510	0.4	3.4
Educational & Health Services	3,410	3,360	3,440	1.5	-0.9
Leisure & Hospitality	3,390	3,360	3,400	0.9	-0.3
Other Services	1,160	1,160	1,160	0.0	0.0
Government Education	6,080	6,100	6,010	-0.3	1.2
Government Administration	4,130	4,130	4,320	0.0	-4.4

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

Springs in Caribou County. In addition to making the highway safer for travel, the improvements are expected to increase traffic and tourism throughout the region.

- Nearly every school district in southeastern Idaho is debating the merits of a four-day school week and a plan that would allow high school students to earn college credits at a reduced fee of \$65 per credit. Districts currently operating on a four-day schedule say attendance has improved and claim educational benefits as well as cost savings. But adapting to the schedule has been difficult for some families.

- Southeastern Idaho will have a less-than-average runoff this spring because snow packs in most basins are only 40 percent to 70 percent of normal, according to Idaho's Water Supply Outlook Report from the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Concerns about water shortages for this summer will be lessened because carryover storage from last year is greater than average. Employers involved in agriculture, directly or indirectly, will be making decisions based on how they think the water supply will affect their ability to do business this year and next.
- Idaho, particularly the counties in eastern Idaho, will be greatly impacted if the Idaho National Laboratory is chosen to be part of President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership initiative. Legislators in the region support the initiative and formalized that stand during the recent legislative session.
- Southeastern Idaho, often recognized for healthy life styles and outdoor recreational opportunities, was found to have the lowest cancer rate in the state, according to a recent Idaho Hospital Association report. The region had 352.5 incidences of cancer per 100,000 person years compared to a state average of 456.7 occurrences.
- Portneuf Medical Center recently began operating its Heart and Vascular Center around the clock now that it has hired two additional doctors. Dr. Julio Vasquez, a cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon, and Dr. David Gonzales, an interventional cardiologist, recently joined the staff.

#### **Bannock County**

- Harry Christ is opening a high-end furniture store, Shoppe at the Paris, at the former location of The Paris in downtown Pocatello. The store will feature metropolitan furnishings, European art and furniture and rugs from Istanbul. Christ also plans to convert the upstairs into three urban-style lofts.
- Pocatello has a new Mediterranean food restaurant, Pasta Vino Ristorante. The new restaurant under Executive Chef Mike Frey is located in the former Bengal Hut.
- Nearly 100 people turned out for the ground breaking of the Old Town Pavilion, which will be located adjacent to the Old Town Pocatello office.
- Downtown Pocatello is home to Syringa Wireless LLC, a telecommunication company serving southern Idaho. The company is a consortium of five long-standing smaller Idaho telecommunications companies and currently has about 1,000 customers.

- Several large spectator events in February contributed significantly to the local economy. The Simplot Indoor Track & Field Games, the Idaho State Wrestling Championships and the Dodge National Circuit Finals Rodeo directly impacted local retail businesses such as motels, food service operations and gas stations. Clothing and novelty stores saw sales increase because of these events, which drew people from many parts of the country.
- Southeastern Idaho's first gated community is being developed on 10 acres south of Highland Golf Course by Coventry Communities. Cooper Creek will offer of 37 homes ranging from \$187,000 to \$250,000.
- The FBI opened a new transcription center at the Pocatello Information and Technology Center. Approximately 20 Idaho State University students will be hired to transcribe material for the 56 FBI field offices throughout the United States.

#### **BEAR LAKE COUNTY**

- On May 15, voters in the Bear Lake County School District will decide what action should be taken by the school board to address decreasing enrollments at schools in Paris, Georgetown and Bear Lake. The middle school student population is projected to decline about 200 students in the next eight years. Options on the advisory ballot require a simple majority.
- Bear Lake County is working with Whisper Mountain Professional Services to address the county's growth plans.
- Montpelier Mayor Reed Peterson is working with others to provide bus transportation for seasonal workers from Montpelier to the Bear Lake area. The bus could also provide transportation for visitors.
- Amy Bishop was recently named director of the Greater Bear Lake Valley Chamber of Commerce. She will divide her time between the chamber and the city of Montpelier. Her office is located in the downtown visitor's center.

#### **BINGHAM COUNTY**

- Bingham County and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game are jointly building a fish hatchery and improving public access to the fishing ponds in the Springfield area. Because of its unusual combination of a cold artesian well and a warm water source, the hatchery will be able to raise both trout and warm water fish such as blue gill, bass and catfish.

- The Bingham County Planning and Zoning Commission voted to grant a special use permit for the construction of a hunting lodge in the mountains east of Blackfoot. The lodge will be owned and operated by Rulon Jones, who also owns an elk hunting operation in the same area.
- Iogen, a Canadian-based biotechnology company, has proposed a cellulosic ethanol plant between Shelley and Firth. Iogen was awarded an \$80 million Department of Energy grant for the project. Construction depends on approval of federal loan guarantees to complete the \$320 million plant. The proposed plant would start production in 2011 and employ about 140 people.
- Nearly 100 percent of the students at the Shoshone-Bannock Junior/Senior High Schools and many elementary students are learning how to handle money by opening accounts in a school mini-bank. The accounts can be as small as \$3 and as large as \$500. The students are required to track deposits and withdrawals as well as learn about the interest earned from savings and the interest paid on borrowed money. The mini-banks are part of the Native American Community Development Corp. The corporation is the economic development arm of the Native American Bank, a national bank established by a group of tribal nations and the Alaska Native Corp. The parent company, Native American Bancorporation, bought its first bank in 2001 in Browning, Mont.
- Bingham County signed a 20-year contract with Logite International to provide solid waste disposal for the county when the current contract with Idaho Waste System expires. Logite uses a steam reforming process to convert any material containing carbon into a gas composed primarily of carbon monoxide. The by-products from this process can be used for energy production or as building blocks for fuels such as methanol, ethanol or biodiesel. The contract is effective June 1, 2010, and construction of the processing facility is expected to begin as soon as permits are obtained from the Department of Environmental Quality.
- Fort Hall is the site of a new manufacturing business. All My Relations Inc. manufactures an attachment for fossil fuel engines which increases fuel efficiency and lessens emissions. The device is a hydrogen/oxygen generator and has been labeled "Go to Green 2448" by developer Robert Dude Perry. Currently the business is manufacturing about 25 generators a day in its 900-square-foot building. But with increased demand, the company is planning to build a 12,000-square-foot facility to manu-

facture 400 units per day. The company offers competitive wages and provides day care for children of employees.

- Atomic City is one of three sites being considered for a spent nuclear fuel recycling facility. EnergySolutions uses a spent nuclear fuel reprocessing technique first used in Great Britain to gain more energy from the fuel. The other sites are in New Mexico and South Carolina. The entire process should also reduce the amount of waste to be stored at places like the Yucca Mountain site in Nevada. If Atomic City is chosen, as many as 5,000 jobs would be created in addition to the jobs needed for the construction of the facility. Construction would not begin before 2020.
- After much discussion and several hearings, the Firth City Council approved phase one of the Kirk Jolley Development for 24 homes. The entire preliminary plat for 120 homes will be reviewed later.

#### *CARIBOU COUNTY*

- Simplot's Conda Pump Station was honored for operating at the highest safety level by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. This is the 11<sup>th</sup> year the facility has been recognized. Of the seven million workplaces being monitored, only 1,600 have achieved this honor – four of those facilities are in Caribou County. The other three are Monsanto Elemental Phosphates, Agrium Conda Phosphate and Kerr-McGee Specialty-Chemicals
- The Caribou County Planning and Zoning Commission is developing new ordinances to implement the county's revised comprehensive plan. Major changes require developers to build oiled roads that essentially meet county standards and to provide common well and septic systems in subdivisions with lots smaller than five acres.
- Caribou Memorial Hospital is working with Bear Lake Memorial to recruit a surgeon to replace Dr. John O'Bray. Because neither Soda Springs nor Montpelier have a large enough population to support specialized physicians, the hospitals hope combining resources will enable them to recruit specialized physicians to the area.
- The Soda Springs City Council has contracted with Mountain Island Energy to conduct wind power feasibility testing on Rabbit Hill.
- Several local businesses have taken advantage of an energy conservation program funded by the Idaho Energy Authority and the city of Soda Springs. If lighting loads are reduced 30 percent or more, up to 70 percent of the project cost is reimbursed. D&S Elec-

trical will conduct the energy audits and recommend appropriate upgrades as well as completing paperwork for the business.

#### ONEIDA COUNTY

- County voters will cast their ballots May 22 on a \$5.6 million bond issue to build a 64-bed jail. If the bond passes, construction could start by late summer.

#### POWER COUNTY

- Discussions are continuing on how to replace Exit 40 on Interstate 84. Idaho Department of Transportation officials recently announced they would be replacing the current interchange with a new one located 50 feet to the east for an estimated \$5 million. But local residents favor a new underpass 1,500 feet to the west of the current interchange, contending that will

help economic development by providing better access to industrial sites and American Fall's businesses. That proposal is estimated to cost \$8 million.

- Kristen Jensen has been named director of the Great Rift Business Development Organization. She has a long history of involvement in American Falls as city councilwoman, coach, 4-H leader and church leader. In her new duties, she will serve the communities of American Falls, Aberdeen and Rockland.

Scott Hobdey Regional Economist  
430 N. 5th Ave., Pocatello, ID 83205  
(208) 236-6710, ext. 3713  
E-mail: [scott.hobdey@cl.idaho.gov](mailto:scott.hobdey@cl.idaho.gov)

### NEW TOOL - LOCATION QUOTIENT CALCULATOR - PROVIDES METHOD FOR COMPARING STATS

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has introduced a new tool for labor market analysis to its Web site services — the Location Quotient Calculator. The calculator generates location quotients, a measure that is familiar to regional labor economists as a way to readily compare the industrial activity levels among different areas of the country.

In general, location quotients are ratios that compare the concentration of a resource or activity, such as employment, in a defined area to that of a larger area or base. For example, location quotients can be used to compare state employment by industry to that of the nation. It is also used to compare state employment to a city, county, metropolitan statistical area or other defined geographic sub-area in the state. The location quotient calculator uses a timely data source that is especially rich in comprehensive industry and area detail — the bureau's Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

With just a few quick selections from the Web form, the user can specify a base or reference area — usually the United States as a whole — and a base or reference industry — usually the private sector, all industries — where industries are classified on a North American Industry Classification System basis. The user may choose up to three geographic areas to be compared to the base area and may choose numerous industries to be compared to the base industry. Users may choose standard industry lists, such as the supersector, sector or subsector levels, or they may select any number of broad or narrowly defined industries for analysis. This innovative use of quarterly census data allows for focused, detailed industry study at the desired geographic level.

For more on how to use the Location Quotient Calculator, log onto <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewlq.htm>. Click on [Location Quotient Calculator](#) to use the calculator.

#### Location Quotient Calculator

##### STEP 1 - YEAR SELECTION AND OTHER DATA CHARACTERISTICS

Year:	2003
Data Period:	Annual Average
Data Type:	All Employees
Ownership:	Private
Establishment Sizes:	All establishment sizes

Sample of calculator found on the bureau's Web site.